

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration and withdrawal of the objections and rejection set forth in the above-mentioned Official Action in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks are respectfully requested.

Drawings

The drawings are objected to because reference characters "31c" and "22", which are mentioned in the specification, are not used in the drawings. In response, the specification has been amended *inter alia* to delete these reference characters.

Accordingly, the objection to the drawings has been overcome.

Specification

The specification is objected to because of minor informalities noted by the Examiner. The specification has been amended to attend to the presence of informalities, including those kindly identified by the Examiner. It is respectfully submitted that no new matter has been added.

Claims Status

Claims 1, 3 through 12, and 14 through 25 are now pending in the application. Claims 2 and 13 have been canceled. Claims 1, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, and 15 through 20 have been amended to even more succinctly define the invention and/or to improve their form. Claims 21 through 25 have been added to accord Applicant an additional scope of protection commensurate with the disclosure. It is respectfully submitted that no new matter has been added. Claims 1, 12, 22, and 23 are the only independent claims pending in the application.

Allowable Subject Matter

It is acknowledged with appreciation that Claims 2 through 7, 9, 13 through 18, and 20 are merely objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claims and any intervening claims.

Claim Objections

Claim 11 is objected to because of an informality noted by the Examiner. In response, Claim 11 has been amended to overcome the objection.

Claims 16 through 18 are objected to under 37 C.F.R. § 1.75(c) as being of improper dependent form for failing to further limit the subject matter of a previous claim. In response, Claims 16 through 18 have been amended *inter alia* to change their respective dependencies to overcome the objections.

It is respectfully submitted that the objections to the claims have been overcome.

Rejection

Claims 1, 8, 10, 11, 12, and 19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,453,143 (Takeuchi).

The rationale underlying the rejection is succinctly set forth in the Official Action.

Response to Rejection

Without conceding the propriety of the rejection, Claims 1 and 12 have been amended to include subject matter, which has been indicated by the Examiner as being allowable. Specifically, Claim 1 has been amended *inter alia* to include the subject matter

of Claim 2. Claim 12 has been amended *inter alia* to include the subject matter of Claim 13. Accordingly, Claims 1 and 12 should now be allowable.

Newly-presented Independent Claims

The invention defined in independent Claims 22 and 23 is directed to an apparatus, wherein lateral shifting of a belt is regulated by engaging a first engaging portion and a second engaging portion, which is provided at an end portion of the supporting member. When the belt moves, a regulating member, which is opposed to the first engaging portion and which is out of contact with the belt, is effective to prevent the first engaging portion from disengaging from the second engaging portion during movement of the belt.

It is respectfully submitted that the cited art, including Takeuchi, does not disclose or suggest the claimed regulating member.

Dependent Claims

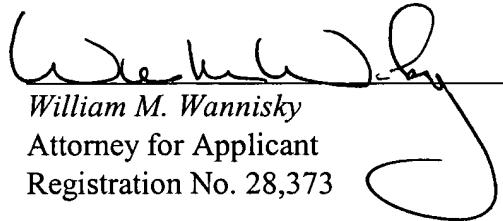
Claims 3 through 11, 14 through 21, 24, and 25 depend either directly or indirectly from one of Claims 1, 12, 22, and 23 and are allowable by virtue of their dependency and in their own right for further defining Applicant's invention. Individual consideration of the dependent claims is respectfully requested.

Closing Comments

It is respectfully submitted that the claims on file are allowable over the art of record and that the application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and early passage to issue of the present application are earnestly solicited.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our New York office at the address shown below.

Respectfully submitted,



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